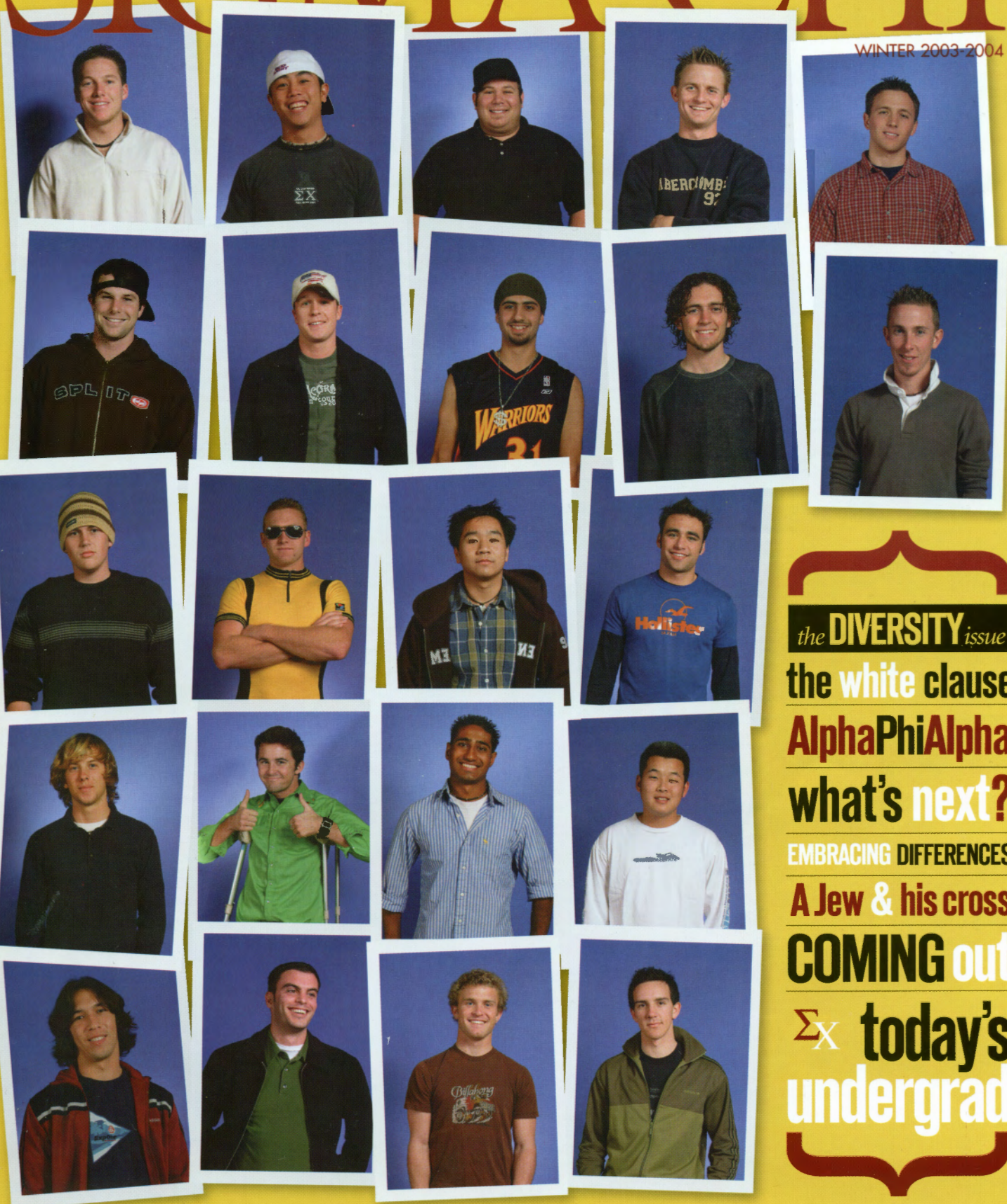



THE MAGAZINE OF

SIGMA CHI

WINTER 2003-2004




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CREATING THIS ISSUE WAS AN EYE-OPENING experience from the very beginning. After Managing Editor Luke Marquard, **BUTLER 2001**, hit the archives to do the in-depth research required to write about membership selection, we quickly became fascinated with Sigma Chis' membership beliefs and the series of debates surrounding them. We also struggled to understand those beliefs and debates, especially when juxtaposed with Sigma Chi's ideals. What part of integrity, ambition or courtesy comes from skin color? Why was getting past the white clause and its equally discriminatory derivatives so difficult for a Fraternity grounded in friendship and justice?

The information became easier to understand when we put it into historical context—into a time when U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent 1,000 troops to Central High in Little Rock, Ark., to escort nine black students into a previously all-white school; when U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which declared both segregation in public facilities and racial discrimination in employment to be illegal; when Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and killed. This was the era when the civil rights movement was in full force and when people's prejudices—right or wrong—were at a high.

We wondered what this meant for us in 2004. Yes, the door on racial and religious discrimination officially closed in 1971. But how could the Fraternity best leave membership selection issues in the past and press ahead, discrimi-



nating only for good character, fair ability, ambitious purposes, congenial disposition, good morals, a high sense of honor and a deep sense of personal responsibility?

The contributors to this issue tell us the Fraternity has moved forward. Sigma Chis today are open to a membership of different temperaments, talents and convictions. Erik Ness, **NORTH CAROLINA STATE 1996**, documents his experience with such progress and delivers his take on how the Fraternity should continue to embrace diversity. Drawing on his business and fraternal experiences, Significant Sig Keith Ferrazzi, **YALE 1988**, relays why embracing all types of differences is vital to an organization's success. Mike Valcy, **BRIDGEWATER 2001**, recalls his struggle to balance being a fraternity man and being gay, and the lessons he learned along the way. Richard Segal, **YALE 1988**, shares his explanation about how it's possible to be Jewish and wear the White Cross. Managing Editor Nicole Voges profiles four members of the Iota Chi Chapter, men whose stories encompass the ideals and beliefs that resonate within the chapter house's walls. She captures the kind of diversity that's undetectable in Jerry Nelson's, **UTAH STATE 1977**, photography. Additionally, Theodis Dancy, a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, delivers a brief history of the African-American fraternity and its place in today's fraternal landscape.

Our contributors don't necessarily speak for the Fraternity or see things the way the entire membership does, but they do give us an idea of how far Sigma Chi has come in the last 33 years. And, agree or disagree, they give us a good idea of where we're heading. Take a look.

~ THE EDITORS



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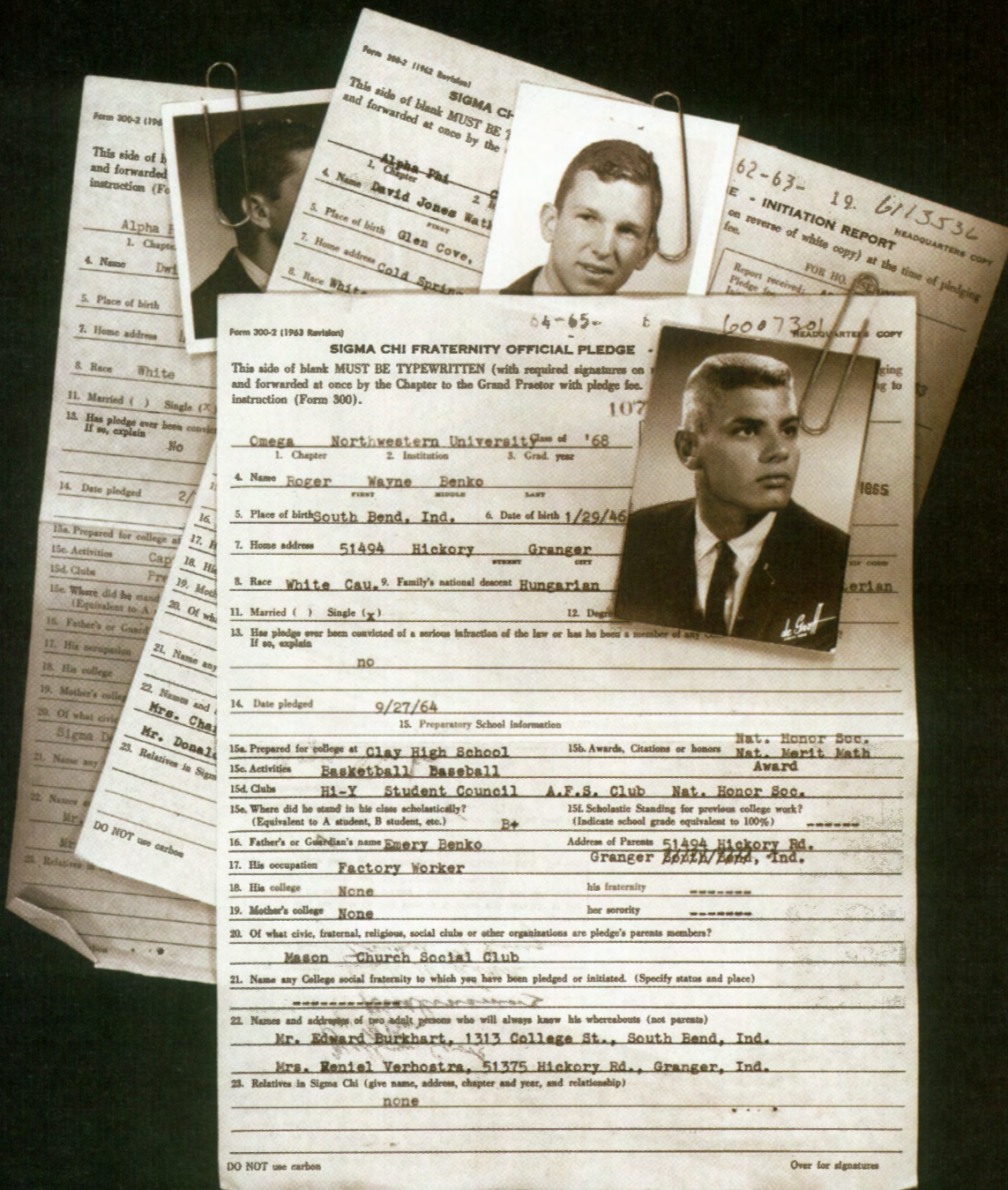
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[the white clause]

A closer look at the evolution of the Fraternity's membership standards and legislation that define who is eligible to become a Sigma Chi.

by Luke Marquard, Butler 2001

“Unless [the amendment] is adopted, some of the oldest and most valuable chapters in our Fraternity will soon be forced out of existence by university regulations, which the Fraternity is without power to disregard or set aside.” ~delegate to the 1959 Grand Chapter

SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT YOU CAN'T MOVE FORWARD until you understand the past. With that thought in mind, I set out to gain a clearer understanding of Sigma Chi's history with regard to membership standards. I knew only two things for sure: 1) Sigma Chi at one point had a "white's only" clause in its Constitution; 2) it doesn't any more. Tossing all preconceived notions and passed-down stories aside, I dug into the Headquarters archives—Grand Chapter transcripts, letters, Executive Committee meeting minutes, History of the Sigma Chi Fraternity: 1955 to 1980, old issues of The Magazine.

The important years—the years when the Fraternity made many decisions and had many debates regarding membership standards—were from 1959 to 1971. I focused my research on these years.

I found that the movement to amend membership standards was a movement to ensure the Fraternity's survival—colleges and universities were beginning to prohibit organizations that discriminated based on race. I found that some members expressed a willingness to work with universities, provided that membership standards were somehow preserved; that some members expressed a desire to maintain membership standards, regardless of consequence; that some members feared letting local chapters have the final say in selecting their members; and that few members expressed a desire to open the Fraternity to all men. I found that the debates and decisions made during this time nearly ripped the Fraternity apart.

~LCM

1870: The white clause

Sigma Chi added what became known as the white clause to its Constitution. No known documentation of the details regarding this addition exists.

1948: Remove "white?"

A Grand Chapter delegate proposed striking the word "white" from the Constitution. The Grand Chapter subsequently sent the matter to a commission, from which it resurfaced on occasion.

1952: A chapter resigns

The Omicron Omicron Chapter at the University of Chicago gave up its charter following disagreements with the General Fraternity and its own alumni regarding approval of initiates.

1959: The debate begins

The Grand Chapter considered an amendment that struck the word "white" from the Constitution and added language forbid-

ding any chapter of the Sigma Chi Fraternity from initiating a student unless it was believed that he would be personally acceptable to any and all members of any and all other chapters.

A growing number of chapters faced pressure from universities to either remove racially discriminative language from their constitutions or face consequences on campus, including removal as campus organizations.

Before debating the amendment, the Grand Chapter unanimously adopted two resolutions that set the ground rules for the proceedings. They agreed to maintain the present standards for membership in the Fraternity, to remind all chapters and members that the bonds of fellowship required that every member be welcome personally as a brother in all the chapters and regions of the Fraternity, and that every chapter owed a duty to the whole Fraternity to refrain from proposing for admission any person who for any reason was likely to be considered personally unacceptable as a brother by any chapter or any member anywhere.

The delegates agreed to keep the standards, but they did not agree about how they would accomplish this task. Supporters of the amendment knew that the Fraternity could not fight university regulations if the Constitution used the word "white" as a barrier to non-whites. They were willing to drop the word because the additional language would, with almost no exception, maintain the standards that the word "white" did. Under existing stipulations and this new amendment, a candidate required unanimous approval from the undergraduate chapter members, chapter advisor, local alumni association president, Grand Praetor and Executive Committee (EC) members, all of whom had to act under the stipulation that no candidate would be given approval who was not believed to be acceptable to all members. Additionally, the amendment would require the EC to reconsider any member's approval at the objection of any other member, even after the subject in question was initiated.

Opponents of the amendment did not want to change the Constitution's wording, especially under the pressure of external critics. Rather than trying to "sneak one by" universities and other critics by removing one word and replacing it with less actionable wording, opponents argued that the Fraternity should face the issue head on. To them, it was a matter of principle.

The opponents also feared local autonomy—giving chapters full control of the selection of their members. They feared that letting chapters determine membership would make Sigma Chi vul-

timeline

• 1861: Civil War begins

• 1862: U.S. President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, which declares all slaves in Confederate states to be free

• 1865: Civil War ends; 13th Amendment abolishes slavery

“No person shall be eligible to membership in the Sigma Chi Fraternity who is not a bona fide white male student in the college or university in which the chapter proposing his initiation is chartered. ...”

~ Sigma Chi Fraternity Constitution, 1959; Article VIII, Section 1(b)

“We are like a guinea pig sitting in a fish bowl with that word ‘white’ in the Constitution. No lawyer, no matter how skillful, can defend it, and no judge, even a Southern judge, will sustain it.” ~ delegate to the 1959 Grand Chapter

nerable to other outside pressures regarding member selection, ultimately leading to the destruction of the Fraternity.

By 1959, several fraternities had dropped their racially restrictive clauses; some had already initiated black members. Opponents reported that such fraternities had since seen the error in their judgment and that those fraternities retaining such clauses would be the strongest fraternities.

A letter written by undergraduates from the Epsilon Omicron Chapter at Western Ontario stated, “[The white clause] must be removed from the Constitution and we suggest that this be done by a mail vote of all chapters as soon as possible. We also feel that, should any chapter submit for approval the pledge form of a non-white, all other things being equal, his color not be taken in prejudice for denial of approval. ... The white clause contradicts our ideals. We may attempt as a Fraternity exclusiveness of high character, but exclusiveness of color is only a prejudice.”

Opponents of the amendment used the letter in their argument to maintain the white clause, pointing out that it showed a penchant for local autonomy and a desire to initiate black students—thereby not maintaining membership standards.

The amendment to strike the white clause and add standards for membership language required support from 150 delegates. The Grand Chapter decided in a roll call vote not to pass the amendment, with 109 voting in favor and 90 voting against.

The Gamma Mu Chapter at Wesleyan University withdrew from membership immediately following Grand Chapter because it could not operate at the university with the Fraternity’s discriminatory Constitutional clause in place.

1960: Alumni get a vote

By passing a set of amendments to Statute VIII of the Constitution, the Grand Council granted alumni the authority to vote concurrently with undergraduates on the acceptance of pledges and initiates in their respective chapters.

The Eta Eta Chapter at Dartmouth College surrendered its charter, stating that it would no longer wait for the Fraternity to allow local control of membership selection.

1961: Membership standards redefined

The Grand Chapter unanimously re-adopted the membership resolutions from 1959, after which they considered a number of proposed amendments to membership articles in the Constitution,

most notably:

- Striking the word “white” from Article VIII, Section 1 (b)
- Adding each member of the Grand Council to the hierarchy of unanimous approval needed for a candidate to be initiated
- Adding requirements that a chapter not propose for membership any man who is not believed to be, for any reason, personally acceptable as a brother by any chapter or any member anywhere
- Adding that a chapter that violates the provisions governing pledging or initiation would thereby revoke its own charter
- Making the membership portions of the Constitution amendable only at Grand Chapter meetings and only by a 90 percent vote

This time around, between 20 and 25 chapters faced university sanctions or loss of recognition.

In a standing vote, the delegates of the 1961 Grand Chapter approved the proposals en bloc—as a package—by about 90 percent. Many of the delegates who had voted against adoption later requested that their votes be counted for the motion, pushing the percentage in favor to 94. Most of the votes against the amendments came from alumni chapter delegates who had been instructed by their chapters to vote against any amendment that would remove “white” from the Constitution. The undergraduate delegates, overwhelmingly, if not unanimously, declared approval of the amendment.

1962: Rules enforced

The Gamma Omicron Chapter at Colgate initiated two Jewish students who had been denied approval, thereby revoking its own charter by acting against provisions adopted in 1961. Jewish members had been initiated without such incident prior to the 1961 amendments to the membership articles.

1963: Staying the course

During Grand Chapter, proposed legislation regarding membership standards was minimal. The body approved the resolutions that:

- The EC be charged with the responsibility of both providing counsel to undergraduate chapters regarding membership provisions and enforcing the review and practice of membership provisions
- A standing committee on standards for membership be

• 1866: Civil Rights Act of 1866 declares all persons born in the United States to be citizens, regardless of race, color or previous condition

• 1870: white clause added to Sigma Chi’s Constitution

• 1875: Civil Rights Act of 1875 ensures all Americans equal access to public facilities; declared unconstitutional in 1883

“Every chapter owes a duty ... to refrain from proposing for membership to our fellowship any person who for any reason is likely to be considered personally unacceptable as a brother by any chapter or any member anywhere.”

~ Sigma Chi Fraternity Constitution, 1961, Article VIII, Section 1(b)

“If the time ever comes that we have an Executive Committee that believes a negro is acceptable to the entire membership of the Fraternity, then we no longer have a national Fraternity and our Executive Committee does not represent us.” ~ delegate to the 1959 Grand Chapter

appointed by the Grand Consul and continue to consider and deal with membership problems that could arise

- A legal subcommittee composed of lawyer members continue to study the legal aspects of any situation that might arise or be anticipated, including legal action to preserve the Fraternity's rights and privileges of free association in the selection of members
- A new subcommittee be established to gather all pertinent and available facts affecting membership selection at colleges and universities where Sigma Chi had chapters

1964: The struggle continues

While Sigma Chi had removed its explicitly discriminatory white clause, it continued to struggle with university regulations, many of which required local chapters to select members without participation by alumni or national/international representatives.

The Nu Nu Chapter at Columbia surrendered its charter because the Fraternity's membership requirements differed from the university's.

1965: In the spotlight

On April 3, the Alpha Omega Chapter at Stanford offered a bid to a black student. Four days later, the chapter lost its charter when the EC reported that the chapter had been contemptuous of the Fraternity and its Ritual and forms of fraternal procedure. Though the charter suspension was not officially linked to the chapter's bid, the Alpha Omega Chapter and Stanford officials pushed the issue into the national spotlight, calling attention to Sigma Chi and its membership selection policies.

That year, Grand Chapter received national and local media coverage, and the Stanford chapter's suspension was a topic of discussion. Many delegates questioned the EC's decision to suspend Alpha Omega. Some believed that the charter was suspended because of the chapter's intention to initiate a black man. [42nd] Grand Consul Harry Wade, **Wabash & Cornell 1926**, maintained that the EC suspended the charter because of the poor conditions of the chapter not because of the pledge.

Several delegates spoke in favor of a proposal by the Gamma Epsilon Chapter at Whitman College that was in favor of local autonomy. Many of them did so to show their alignment with the policies of their respective universities. In a vote that required 90 percent approval to pass, the Grand Chapter rejected the proposal to provide for local autonomy, with 122 voting in favor and 51 voting against.

The Grand Chapter passed a mandate directing the EC to cease requesting race, family's national descent, religion and church membership, and a photograph on the Fraternity's official pledge form. Though this was a mandate, several members of the Grand Council refused to comply, insisting that each Grand Praetor continue to provide to the Grand Council such information about all pledges in his province. Additionally, Headquarters continued to distribute lists containing race, religion and family history to the Grand Council.

The University of Colorado revoked the Beta Mu Chapter's recruitment and pledging privileges in response to news about Sigma Chi's alleged racial discrimination at Stanford. Later that year, Sigma Chi filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in Denver against the regents of the university, claiming the Colorado chapter had been denied due process of law and that the Fraternity's rights as a private association had been violated. The courts ruled

A change of heart



Bell happily displays boxer shorts announcing his support of the chapter at Yale.

When Grand Consul Thomas Bell arrived at Yale for the chapter's installation inspection, he wasn't all that excited to be there.

When we were a petitioning local at Yale, the General Fraternity sent T. Bell [55th Grand Consul Thomas Bell, Mississippi State 1935] up to be our installing officer. We thought we were going to be installed the previous year, but frankly, we weren't ready. So the second year around, we were a little gun shy for fear that the installing officer would ask us to hold off again.

T. Bell came to visit, and he wasn't the friendliest person when we first met him, so we tried to warm

him up. We took him out to a nice dinner and held a [local] ritual meeting. Ultimately, we went to the Yale eating and drinking club called Mory's, where there was a lot of toasting and singing going on. He was still pretty staunch and sober in his demeanor, and we were all sweating bullets.

As tradition goes at Yale, we each stood up and made a toast to some aspect of our brotherhood, discussing what we wanted to achieve—both within the organization and as individuals. Finally, the cup came to T. Bell, who stood up, looked at us and said, in his perfect Southern drawl, “Boys, I know you don't want me here. And to be perfectly honest, I don't want to be here. When the Fraternity decided to name an installing officer to determine whether or not you're appropriate to become Sigma Chis, they picked the toughest ass in this here Fraternity, and that's me.

“You know, when I walked into the room earlier this evening to have dinner with you gentlemen, I thought I had walked into the goddamn United Nations.”

At that point, our eyes were rolling back into our heads and we were thinking that we were totally in for it, that we were not only going to be judged upon how we were as a chapter, but also prejudiced against because of our incredibly diverse makeup.

Then T. Bell continued, “But I've got to tell you something. I have never seen the spirit of Sigma Chi so alive in a group of young men as I have here this evening. I'm looking forward to welcoming you into the brotherhood.”

What I feel T. Bell was saying in his round-about way was that what really mattered were those core values, the brotherhood and how that brotherhood was portrayed. Neither the history of segregation, nor cultural and ethnic diversity was important. What was important was that the only thing that was shared was not skin color, nationality or sexuality, but the values of Sigma Chi. And as for T. Bell, he became one of the strongest supporters of our chapter and a great personal friend who I truly miss. ♡

~Keith Ferrazzi, Yale 1988

“Brothers, I love Sigma Chi like you do and I don’t want to see Sigma Chi be turned into a regional Sigma Chi International Fraternity. Why, 15 years from now we might have 50 Grand Chapters.” ~ *delegate to the 1967 Grand Chapter*

1960s SIGMA CHI REFERENCE

Several legislative bodies and Grand Officers played important roles in determining membership standards. Their definitions during that time period differ somewhat from their definitions today. The following definitions come from the Governing Laws in place between 1961 and 1969.

Grand Chapter: The supreme legislative body of the Fraternity, convening every two years and composed of delegates from undergraduate and alumni chapters, the Grand Consul and the several Past Grand Consuls. Grand Chapter enactments came in the form of **permanent Constitutional amendments** and **Statutes**, and **temporary resolutions**. All such enactments were mandatory upon the chapters, associations, officers and members of the Fraternity.

The Grand Council: Legislative body meeting annually and having general supervision, direction and control over the Fraternity during the recess of the Grand Chapter and with all of the power of the Grand Chapter except the power to alter or amend the Constitution or Ritual or to grant or revoke charters. The Grand Council was composed of the Grand Consul, Grand Pro Consul, Grand Tribune, Grand Quaestor, Grand Historian, members of the Executive Committee who were not Grand Officers, the several Grand Praetors, the several Grand Trustees and the several Past Grand Consuls.

Executive Committee: Composed of nine members of the Fraternity, the Grand Consul, the Grand Pro Consul, the Grand Quaestor, the immediate Past Grand Consul, an alumnus elected from the 10 immediately preceding International Balfour Award winners [added after 1961]; a Grand Trustee selected by the Board of Grand Trustees, a Grand Praetor selected by the Grand Praetors and two other members.

The Grand Consul: The official head of the Fraternity, acting as chairman of the Grand Council, calling all regular and special sessions of the Grand Chapter and Grand Council and signing all charters and other official Fraternity documents. The Grand Consul was given the power to veto any action of the Grand Council and the power to interpret, construe and enforce the Constitution, Ritual and Statutes of the Fraternity.

Grand Praetors: Alumni with supervision over the chapters in their respective provinces, who maintained an intimate knowledge of their conditions and necessities and reported the same in full with recommendations thereon to the EC. They were charged with advancing the interests of the Fraternity throughout the geographical sections constituting their provinces.

against Sigma Chi. The chapter continued operations, but closed its doors in 1971 due to a decline in membership.

The Beta Nu Chapter at Brown turned in its charter because the Fraternity and university did not align on membership standards.

1966: Another chapter lost

The Phi Chapter at Lafayette College surrendered its charter when a pledge of Asian descent was denied approval. Asian members had been initiated without such incident prior to the 1961 amendments to the membership articles.

1967: Change on the horizon

The 1967 Grand Chapter addressed a proposal aimed to modify membership requirements so that the local chapter and local alumni representatives would have authority to approve candidates for membership.

Supporters stated the proposal would help with the Fraternity’s ongoing struggles with colleges and universities and would create a better candidate approval system. Opponents cited, among other concerns, that the proposal would break down the international scope of the Fraternity.

The proposal to transfer candidate approval powers from the EC and Grand Council to a more local committee required a 90 percent majority to pass. The Grand Chapter decided in a roll call vote not to change the requirement, with 108 voting in favor and 100 voting against.

In another vote requiring 90 percent to pass, the Grand Chapter defeated a proposal to change the percentage of votes needed to amend membership sections of the Constitution from 90 percent back to 75 percent, with 77 voting in favor and 118 voting against.

The Gamma Epsilon at Whitman College surrendered its charter after learning a pledge of Asian descent was denied approval.

1968: Tensions on the rise

The EC revoked the charter of the Alpha Beta Chapter at California-Berkeley after Grand Consul Floyd Baker and his wife reported they were treated rudely by undergraduates who questioned the Fraternity’s membership selection regulations. The chapter’s Grand Praetor felt the EC’s decision was an overreaction.

1969: Majority doesn’t rule

A major proposal before the Grand Chapter aimed to give the final decision regarding candidate approval to the undergraduate

• 1954: U.S. Supreme Court rules that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional • 1955: Rosa Parks refuses to give up her bus seat to a white customer and is arrested; boycott of city busses follows • 1957: U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower sends 1,000 troops to Little Rock, Ark., to escort nine black students into a previously all-white school

“Every chapter owes a duty to every other chapter, to the whole Fraternity and to any man considered for membership, to refrain from proposing for membership to our fellowship any person who

does not meet the Standards for Membership in Sigma Chi.”

~ *Sigma Chi Fraternity Constitution, 1971, Article VIII, Section 1(c)*

“I honestly believe, my brothers, we have come to a point where we had either better do something or we had better quit talking about honor, truth and justice.”
~ *delegate to the 1969 Grand Chapter*

chapter and local Grand Praetor. This would result in a great shift in membership approval, as a local chapter would only need to consider EC and Grand Council suggestions, not await unanimous EC and Grand Council approval.

Supporters of the proposal argued that requiring all initiates to be socially acceptable to all Sigma Chis was unrealistic and warned that failing to act could jeopardize the existence of some chapters.

Opponents did not approve of changing membership selection criteria to meet the demands of colleges and universities. One of their reasons was that bowing to such pressure could be another step toward disfranchising the Fraternity. Opponents were not only wary of the division that administrators could enforce, but also of the division that could take place within the Fraternity's own membership if authority was given to fewer people.

The proposal to shift membership approval from the EC and Grand Council to the chapter and local Grand Praetor was defeated by the Grand Chapter, with 122 voting in favor and 100 voting against.

Delegates had lengthy discourse regarding a proposal similar to one defeated in 1967, which aimed to reduce the 90 percent voting requirement in membership areas of the Constitution to the otherwise standard of 75 percent.

Opponents of the proposal voiced concern that changing requirements from 90 percent to 75 percent would only be the start of a trend to make voting criteria more lax. Some argued for higher standards—100 percent. Folks on this side also pointed out that the 90 percent rule was not unreasonable, especially when considering that in 1961 the 90 percent rule itself was passed by more than 90 percent.

Supporters argued that the rule was indeed unreasonable and that hesitation to change this rule was a matter of racial discrimination. They pointed out the difference between what the undergraduate delegates voiced—opening membership to a broader base of people—and what the alumni delegates voiced—limiting membership to whites. Supporters also pled for adoption of the proposal by pointing out what they saw as unjust practices allowed under the membership rules—mainly that a Grand Officer from one region could deny membership to a candidate in another region. These practices were nearly impossible to change under the 90 percent rule.

The 1969 Grand Chapter decided not to adopt the amendment, with 157 voting in favor and 60 voting against (an overwhelming majority but short of the 90 percent required for passage).

The Grand Chapter passed a resolution aimed to help resolve the membership selection problems. It required incoming Grand Consul Norman Brewer, **Mississippi 1935**, to appoint a board charged with both determining the manner, if any, in which Sigma Chi could split into separate organizations with separate membership standards and providing recommendations regarding such a split. *[In December, after much review of the Fraternity's membership selection process and campus culture, that Planning Board reported that while the primary problems of university-required local autonomy and the 90 percent rule presented challenges, splitting the Fraternity into separate organizations was not the solution. While the Planning Board did not provide a solution for the selection problems, it did make evident the need to find a solution ensuring the longevity of the General Fraternity.]*

The Grand Chapter also passed a resolution that information not specified in the Constitution and Statutes not be requested by members of the Grand Council. This resolution led to a standstill in the Grand Council approval process later that fall. In an attempt to break up this log jam, Brewer urged all Grand Praetors to continue supplying unspecified information until the Planning Board reported its findings (a few months later). Some Grand Council members complied with the request; others did not. This disparity in available information spurred some members of the Grand Council to withhold their approval on province pledge classes for which they did not receive information. In turn, other Grand Council members retaliated by withholding their approval on other province's candidates. This back and forth continued until some members of the Grand Council rejected all of a province's pledge classes.

The Delta Lambda Chapter at Davidson surrendered its charter due to its inability to comply with the school's local autonomy requirements. At this time, Sigma Chi was one of the last few major fraternities that hadn't allowed its chapters to initiate black students.

1970: The EC takes action

The EC met on Jan. 2, 1970, under Brewer's charge to either do something about the membership problem or let him do it. In that meeting, 46th Grand Consul John Graham, **Toronto 1933**, then Grand Pro Consul, pointed out that Fraternity laws did not require providing Grand Council members with any information about proposed members. So, the Fraternity could stop providing such information, effectively granting local autonomy to the chapters. Grand Council members, with the exception of Grand Praetors in

• **1961:** White clause is removed from the Sigma Chi Constitution

• **1963:** Martin Luther King Jr. delivers "I Have a Dream" from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington

• **1964:** Civil Rights Act of 1964 declares segregation in public facilities and racial discrimination in employment to be illegal

“The Standards for Membership in the Sigma Chi Fraternity shall be ... that no man shall be admitted to membership who is not believed to be a man of good character, a student of fair ability, with ambitious purposes, a congenial disposition, possessed of good morals, and having a high sense of honor and a deep sense of personal responsibility.”

~ *Sigma Chi Fraternity Constitution, 1971, Statute VIII, Section 1(a)*

AFRICAN-AMERICAN FRATERNITIES HAVE STOOD the test of time. They, like their Caucasian counterparts, have a history of educating, mentoring and contributing to charitable causes. Indeed, all of America's collegiate fraternities can boast an impressive roster of brothers who have made a difference in their respective organizations and can point to impressive community service accomplishments. So, in the 21st century, why don't all fraternities strive to embrace brothers who are diverse both in their cultures and in the skills they possess?

Lawrence C. Ross Jr. provides a historical account of African-American Greek-lettered organizations in *The Divine Nine: The History of African American Fraternities and Sororities*. According to Ross, African-American students were isolated and segregated from Caucasian students, which led to an abysmal retention rate of African-American students at institutions of higher education. Such was the case at the Cornell University campus, where, after becoming a successful study-group-turned-secret-society, seven students founded the first African-American fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, on Dec. 4, 1906.

Like other fraternities, Alpha Phi Alpha has committed to mentoring and uplifting humanity through charitable and educational activities. These fraternities have traditionally focused on community service, specifically working to positively impact the community's youth and to uplift the African-American family. Members of these fraternities dedicate themselves to these causes not just during college, but for a lifetime—showing undying dedication and etching their place in today's fraternal landscape.

The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), established in 1930, is an organization comprised of nine predominantly African-American Greek-lettered fraternities and sororities. Its overall goal is to further collaborative cooperation of its member organizations on college and university campuses and with the communities touched by its members. The North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC), established in 1910, similarly supports its 66 member organizations.

The dual existence of the NPHC and NIC is deemed necessary by those who argue that there is incompatibility between the organizations' groups. Possible reasons cited for such incompatibility include differences in history, values and fraternity membership recruitment procedures, as well as the potential for chaotic and unproductive relations resulting from a mutual lack of cultural understanding. However, these differences are minute and many perceptions of incompatibility are nothing more than illusions.

It is important to remember that NPHC chapters proliferated on historically black campuses—environments that were saturated with African-American culture. Therefore, NPHC-member fraternities and sororities may assert that their reluctance to join the NIC should not classify them as narrow-minded organizations, but rather as organizations that choose to further develop their own membership body. It may also

be perceived that joining the NIC somehow diminishes the NPHC's value. Still, joint membership can never lessen the worth of the contributions the NPHC has made to its membership by providing African-American fraternities and sororities the opportunity to enhance the members' college experiences—experiences that were historically denied or unavailable in myriad higher learning environments. NPHC-member organizations assert that collaborative efforts between the NPHC and NIC, such as annual agenda-advancing meetings, amply address differences between national coordinating bodies.

African-American students are not limited to becoming members of sororities and fraternities that belong to the NPHC, nor are non-black students limited to rushing only NIC organizations. Alpha Phi Alpha has never discouraged Caucasian membership in its documents or orders. Although Alpha Phi Alpha did not make a concerted historical effort to include Caucasian members, this was only a reflection of the social context of the period. Also, there has never been an overwhelming number of Caucasian males seeking membership in any of the historically black Greek-lettered organizations. However, in the 21st century, Alpha Phi Alpha, like the other African-American fraternities, values brothers who are from diverse backgrounds.

It is appalling to me that some people question whether there is a need for "race-based" fraternities, as if their existence implies anything other than separatism—paralleling the "separate but equal" mandates that defined American higher education prior to 1954. And while I do not believe that the independent operation of the NIC and NPHC promotes such separatism, I do believe that intensive efforts to encourage inclusiveness in their member organizations remain unremarkable. Quite simply, if the African-American fraternity was created within a social context that no longer exists in its original form, then shouldn't its *modus operandi* expand to embrace diversity in its membership? This same question of inclusiveness is also posed to those fraternities that are historically and predominately Caucasian, for if diversifying their fraternities were a primary goal, then a serious attempt would be made to aggressively seek racially diverse brothers to "correct" the callous actions of the past.

While there are members of other races in both types of fraternities, inclusiveness is not being embraced. It is simply tolerated.

Supporters of the status quo—tolerance—justify their espousal with the soft reasoning of differences in cultures, purposes and commitments. Surely, there is a way to bridge this gap. It takes building on commonalities and exploring differences. All fraternities should eschew any remnant of close-minded tradition. Instead, let us all embrace diversity and inclusiveness as the most advantageous way to achieve our goals for the 21st century. ♣

Dancy is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. and a doctoral student in higher education administration at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, La.



minority report

A brief account of the African-American fraternity: past, present and future

by Theodis Elon Dancy II, Alpha Phi Alpha

“If you can’t trust us with a three-fourths vote to determine what are going to be the membership rules of this body, we ought not be here in the first place. They ought to just set up their own rules.”
~delegate to the 1969 Grand Chapter

their respective provinces, would no longer receive information and thus could no longer withhold approval on a person or group.

The committee unanimously adopted a resolution regarding standards of membership selection, which paved the way for legislative change in 1971. The resolution provided that any individual proposed for membership would be eligible for initiation if he was approved for pledgship by the unanimous vote of the active chapter concerned; was approved by those active alumni members of such active chapter who were present at the meeting at which the foregoing unanimous approval was obtained; was approved by the chapter advisor of such active chapter; was approved by the president or other delegated officer of the house corporation of such active chapter—if there was no such house corporation, such approval could be granted by an active alumnus of such active chapter; was approved by the Grand Praetor of the province in which the active chapter was located; and was not disapproved for initiation by the Grand Consul.

Membership selection issues ceased almost immediately. Brewer’s being from the South aided in this matter.

On Feb. 8, the Gamma Pi Chapter at Rochester initiated the first black Sigma Chi. The chapter, unaware of the EC resolution, proceeded with the Initiation, expecting to lose its charter.

1971: Official resolution

The Grand Chapter, with virtually no debate, voted to change many of the standards of membership areas of the Constitution, including deleting the language forbidding chapters from proposing for admission any person who for any reason is likely to be considered personally unacceptable as a brother by any chapter anywhere; removing the requirement of unanimous EC consent and lack of Grand Council dissent for candidate approval; and changing voting requirements for membership areas of the Constitution from 90 percent back to 75 percent. These changes made the 1970 EC resolutions permanent amendments to the Constitution and Statutes.

After several years of constant, passionate debate over membership; of give-and-take legislation; of concern and fear over institutional regulations; of internal divide, the Grand Chapter voted with overwhelming approval to change its standards. ♡

• 1965: The Alpha Omega Chapter at Stanford pushes Sigma Chi’s membership selection debate into the national spotlight

• 1968: Martin Luther King Jr. is shot and killed

• 1970: The EC adopts resolutions that virtually put an end to membership selection debates

• 1970: Sigma Chi initiates its first black member

CHAPTERS LOST AS A RESULT OF MEMBERSHIP SELECTION REGULATIONS

Chapter School Suspended Returned

Omicron Omicron Chicago 1952 (unchartered)
The chapter gave up its charter following disagreements with the General Fraternity and Omicron Omicron alumni regarding approval of initiates.

Gamma Mu Wesleyan 1959 (unchartered)
The chapter withdrew from the Fraternity, citing inability to exist as a meaningful part of the organization as long as the provision requiring discrimination in membership was in place.

Eta Eta Dartmouth 1960 (unchartered)
The chapter was forced by Dartmouth College to either surrender its charter or lose its rushing and other privileges. The college required that its fraternities be given absolute freedom to choose their own members.

Gamma Omicron Colgate 1962 1971
The chapter proceeded with an Initiation, despite denial of approval, of two Jewish pledges. By this Initiation, under the provisions created in 1961, the chapter revoked its own charter. While some debate surrounded this revocation, it ultimately held up.

Nu Nu Columbia 1964 1984
The chapter surrendered its charter, citing that Sigma Chi’s membership selection procedures were in conflict with university policies. The university required complete local autonomy.

Beta Nu Brown 1965 1973
The chapter returned its charter to the General Fraternity due to its inability to meet university membership standards.

Alpha Omega Stanford 1965 1974
The chapter extended a bid to a black student, who accepted it. Four days later, the

Executive Committee (EC) suspended the chapter’s charter, citing that the chapter had been contemptuous of the Fraternity and the Ritual. The EC reinstated the chapter in April of 1966. A few months later, the chapter announced to its alumni and the press that it was still not in agreement with the Fraternity’s membership selection regulations. The EC again revoked the chapter’s charter, and Sigma Chi did not return to campus until 1974.

Phi Lafayette 1966 1982
The chapter surrendered its charter, citing differences with the Grand Council. The Grand Council had denied approval to a Lafayette pledge who was born in Honolulu and was of Korean descent. The university became aware of the denial and threatened to bar Sigma Chi from the campus if the pledge was not initiated. The undergraduate chapter and its alumni decided the best move for the chapter was to withdraw from the Fraternity.

Gamma Epsilon Whitman 1967 1970
The chapter became inactive due to conflict with Sigma Chi’s membership selection regulations. The chapter wanted to pledge and initiate men of their choosing, and the Grand Council denied approval to one of the chapter’s pledges who was of Asian descent.

Alpha Beta California-Berkeley 1968 1972
Some members of the chapter aggressively addressed the membership selection regulations with Grand Consul Floyd Baker, who was visiting campus with his wife. The Executive Committee decided that Berkeley was not a suitable location for a chapter and unanimously voted to revoke the chapter’s charter.

Delta Lambda Davidson 1969 (unchartered)
The chapter voted to return its charter to the General Fraternity following an active pursuit of local autonomy. The chapter had pledged a black student who they thought would not be approved for initiation. Additionally, the college required local autonomy.

Beta Mu Colorado 1971 1981
Following news of the Stanford suspension in 1965, the university suspended the chapter’s rushing and pledging privileges until the chapter could comply with university membership rules. Sigma Chi filed a lawsuit against the regents of the university, contending that inappropriate action had been taken because of what happened at another institution and that the Fraternity’s rights as a private association had been violated. Sigma Chi lost the suit in 1966. The chapter remained active, though unrecognized, and suffered a steady decline in membership until it was forced to close its doors in 1971.

REMEMBER MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH diversity in the Fraternity. I met a black Sigma Chi at our province conference. I was equally proud and disappointed—proud to call him my brother and give him the grip; disappointed in myself and my chapter for seeing this as unusual. A few summers later in the Pro Consul's division of the Balfour Leadership Training Workshop, I met another black Sigma Chi, elected Pro Consul of the Eta Chapter at Ole Miss. My ambivalence resurfaced. I took pride in the fact that a traditional chapter in the deep South was not confined by our unpleasant history with race; yet, again I was disappointed with myself for seeing this as a big deal. After all, he was just another undergraduate brother, like me, trying to learn new skills to take back to the chapter.

In my five years on the Headquarters staff, I talked with Significant Sig Clarence Gilyard, **Cal. State-Longbeach 1981**, at a number of Balfour LTWs about race in Sigma Chi, learned from other black leaders in the Fraternity, and facilitated dozens of discussions with black, Asian and Latino brothers. By adding perspective and depth to conversations, modeling appreciation of other cultures and reminding us of our shared fraternal values, these experiences suggest that our Fraternity's experience with diversity since the "white clause" has been a proud one. Perhaps most telling of this proud history is that the Fraternity became more diverse in membership and leadership without much fanfare. Since my first province conference, I have noticed that other province conferences, Balfour LTWs, Grand Chapters and Horizons sessions have become gradually more diverse. In small group discussions or private conversations this trend is occasionally recognized, but more often all brothers are treated simply as brothers, not black brothers or white brothers, Hispanic brothers or Asian brothers.

However, it is also safe to say that diversity remains a challenge for many chapters. The composites on the walls in some chapter houses remain as white for the class of 2004 as they were for the class of 1964. And, in some chapter houses, racial slurs and insensitive jokes are not as uncommon as they ought to be. Sadly, these trends are not limited to fraternities, as college campuses continue to face the uncomfortable challenge of hateful graffiti in residence halls and bigoted editorials in student newspapers. While in some cases Sigma Chi chapters have challenged their campus communities to be more tolerant, in others, chapters have been complicit in their silence, or worse, illustrative of this intolerance. At times, such sentiments even spill over into leadership conferences, yet what happens in these instances gives me the most hope for the future of the Fraternity.

As an example, at Horizons only a few years ago, one brother in a small group of eight consistently made insensitive comments and disparaging remarks about another group member's culture. In response, every other group member challenged these comments and pointed to their inconsistency with Sigma Chi values. Though the brother's narrow perspective remained as such, the discourse proved invaluable, and the courage to confront another brother inspired confidence. In the end, the challenged brother returned to his chapter knowing that not all Sigma Chis shared his views and those in his small group returned to

their chapters with a reminder that the Fraternity's tumultuous history with race is not necessarily in the past.

In my first year of graduate school at Vanderbilt, the university suffered a string of racist vandalism in its residence halls. In response, the Alpha Psi Chapter of Sigma Chi stepped up and hosted a hate crime forum, which served as a venue for students to vent their frustrations with such cowardly and hateful acts and to formulate a campus response.

As I look to the Fraternity's future with diversity, my thoughts remain mixed. I am proud when brothers challenge one another and even more proud when chapters challenge their communities. As proud as these events make me, I am disappointed that I remain shocked by them. Why should I see sponsoring a

hate crime forum or confronting a racist brother as unusual? Sigma Chis are charged, both individually and collectively, to seek out differences in temperaments, talents and convictions. This is not to suggest that chapters should feel pressured to extend bids to minority students just for the sake of diversity, or that diversity in Sigma Chi should be measured directly by the racial composition of each chapter. Rather, to truly meet the spirit of Sigma Chi, I believe chapters and individual members should strive to emulate the courage the small group of brothers from Horizons showed by confronting a brother, and the leadership the Alpha Psi Chapter showed in shaping their campus' stance against hate. These instances steadily improve the Order's reputation with regard to diversity.

The tricky thing about diversity is that there is a fine line between not treating or thinking of people differently because of their race and at the same time appreciating the benefits of a diverse membership. Recently, Sigma Chis have done a much better job of looking at all brothers as men of good character, rather than as white, black or brown men of good character. However, I don't think the Fraternity has recognized the immense benefits diversity offers in meeting its purpose of friendship, justice and learning. As we move forward, we should do so with some questions in mind.

- How can we live up to *The Spirit* without friendships built upon differences?
- Where is the justice if morally sound men are denied membership based on their differences?
- What better way to promote learning than through differences within the Fraternity?

As we continue to cultivate and maintain these three aims, we'd be wise to recognize diversity in our ranks and reap its rewards. ♣

Ness worked as a leadership consultant and the director of education at Sigma Chi Headquarters from 1996-2001. He is pursuing his doctorate in higher education at Vanderbilt University.

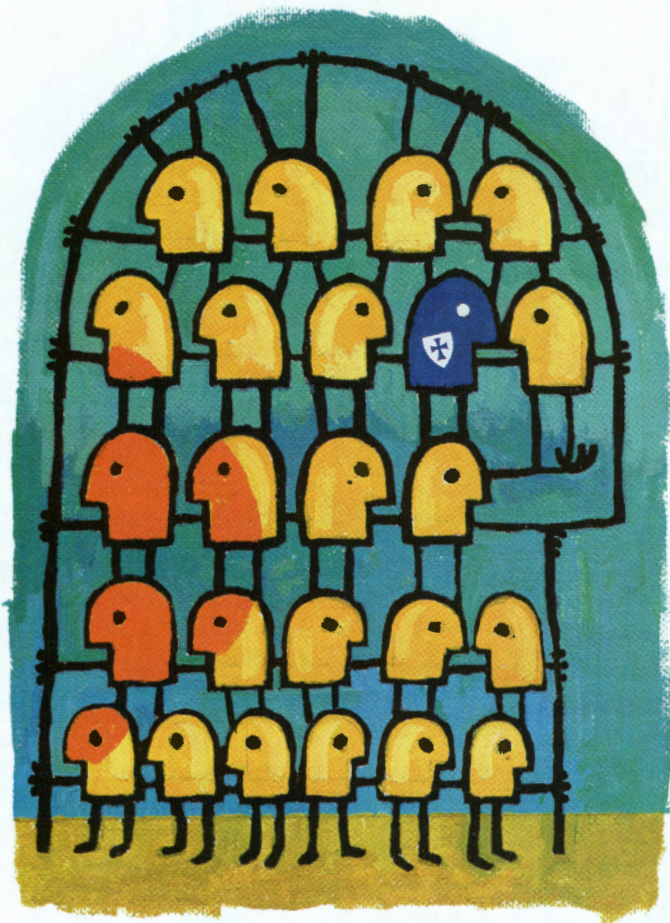


Photo by June Voser

MOVING FORWARD

We know where we've been. Where do we go now?

By Erik Ness, North Carolina State 1996



human resources

Organizations are only as strong as their memberships. A Significant Sig challenges his brothers to strengthen Sigma Chi by welcoming members regardless of sexuality, race or religion.

by Keith Ferrazzi, Yale 1988

STANDING IN FRONT OF 700 BROTHERS AND FRIENDS OF the Fraternity while I accepted my Significant Sig Award at Grand Chapter 2003, I saw a sea of what were predominantly straight, white men. And as excited and privileged as I felt to receive that honor, I was also a bit saddened by the homogeneity that sat before me. In that moment, I thought about the book, *If the World were a Village*. It states that if the world were a village, and if 100 people lived in that village, then only nine would speak English and five would be from the United States or Canada. If Sigma Chi were a village, it would look quite different from the world's village. And unless it wants to be outstripped and left behind by other social organizations (of all types, not just fraternities) that are keeping up with the changes around them, Sigma Chi needs to be more congruous with the direction the world is going.

If we are "comfortable" hanging out with people who are like us, why change? Because in our own lives, decisions are better made and our lives are made richer coming from a broader set of experiences. By embracing diversity in our organizations, we ensure a broader set of inputs.

While in my late 20s, I was named the youngest-ever chief marketing officer of a Fortune 500 company—Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, Inc. In general, I've observed that marketing

innovations are often slow to come about at Fortune 500 companies. One reason is that most marketing budgets are controlled by overweight, middle-aged white guys—often out of touch with their target market. As one example, understanding how urban youth culture influences the way people in their 20s consume and view the world is vital, because people in their 20s significantly influence how the rest of us consume and view the world. Frankly, none of us in our 30s want to believe that we're not in our 20s anymore. And people in their 20s are looked up to by people in their teens. So that 20-some-year-old demographic significantly influences what is bought in America. Yet the people who make marketing decisions just aren't those people. They often think of men and women in their 20s as "just kids" and not as the discerning, bright adults and cultural trendsetters they are.

It also doesn't surprise me that undergraduate chapters so often lead our Fraternity on tough decisions, because that's where trends are started. It's alumni who will drag their feet on issues,

Just as businesses are learning, diversity needs to not only be made a non-issue, but also to be actually embraced by the Fraternity.

because they're not of today's era. So, we got rid of the white clause in a charge dominated by the undergraduate chapters, and we proudly pat ourselves on the back for that. Wrong! We can't rest on those laurels. In fact, it took us way too long to do it in the first place.

To push the point further, I believe Sigma Chis are now faced with the next major human rights hurdle, discrimination against homosexuality. While I don't remember any openly gay brothers from when I was an undergrad, I know there were Sigma Chis in the closet—it's a shame that I, a founder of my chapter and representative to the Executive Committee, was one of them. It is true that Sigma Chis have thankfully started the push by pledging and initiating openly gay men, but I feel we have a long way to go here. The bottom line is that brothers shouldn't feel embarrassed or shunned because of their race, religion or sexuality.

Sigma Chi provides the opportunity to learn, test and push our own beliefs, and to experience things that prepare us to go out into the real world. Just as businesses are learning, diversity needs to not only be made a non-issue, but also to be actually embraced by the Fraternity. The fact is that free markets ultimately work. Organizations that limit themselves to a pool of talent based on externalities, and fail to embrace the richness that diversity brings, will suffer in the marketplace. Fraternities, companies and organizations that don't embrace differences as valuable will be less effective than those that do, because they're turning their backs on a very powerful set of resources.

I love this Fraternity. I embrace the values of the brotherhood and I want to see future generations of young men be able to share in this experience. As a brotherhood we need to be true leaders, not just among fraternities but in the world. If we can be, then we will forever be celebrated for our foresight and courage. If we fail to step up today, we will not be remembered at all. ♣

Ferrazzi is CEO and president of YaYa, an Internet AdverGames company. He is a frequent commentator on CNN and CNBC and has authored several pieces for publications including The Wall Street Journal. Sigma Chi recognized him with a Significant Sig Award in 2003. He previously contributed to the Spring 2003 issue about mentors.

IN THE 17 YEARS since my initiation into Sigma Chi, I've listened to the same question, in one form or another, dozens of times. "Is that a cross on your ring?" "Don't you have to be Christian to be a Sigma Chi?" "Isn't that the Christian cross on that emblem?" "Is it hard to be Jewish and a Sigma Chi?" The answer to that last question is quite simple: It is very easy to be Jewish and a Sigma Chi, but it often requires some explanation to non-members.

I start my explanation by referencing one of Sigma Chi's guiding principles that comes to us from our Founders—a brotherhood is stronger when composed of members with different temperaments, talents and convictions. This is a very inclusionary concept, the modern term for which is diversity—the idea that more learning and personal growth goes on when you surround yourself with people who are different from you, rather than people who are just like you. In 1855 Ohio, diversity on a college campus meant men of

different ideas, interests and skills only, as college students were most often from identical backgrounds—white, male, Protestant and financially well-off. In modern America, college students come from many ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds and can bring their more diverse personal experiences into the fraternity experience, as the Founders would have intended had they seen the modern college campus.

The next part of my explanation usually contains a bit of Fraternity history. I explain that the White Cross on our various regalia is the Cross of Constantine, and is not exactly the same as the cross that might hang in a church. The story goes that while preparing for a key battle, an angel appeared to Constantine, Emperor of Rome, and instructed him to emblazon his army with the sign of the white cross, which appeared to him aglow in the heavens. The angel then uttered, "In hoc signo vinces"—"In this sign you will conquer." Constantine subsequently won a great victory and attributed it to the cross. Is it just a coincidence that the

"Mom? It's Rich. I've got some news I think you're gonna like."

"Really? What's going on?"

"Remember how you were a founder of your sorority's chapter at the University of Michigan when you were an undergraduate? Well, I just joined a group that's doing the same thing here at Yale."

"You're kidding! Fraternities at Yale? I didn't think there were any fraternities at Yale. What fraternity is it?"

"Sigma Chi."

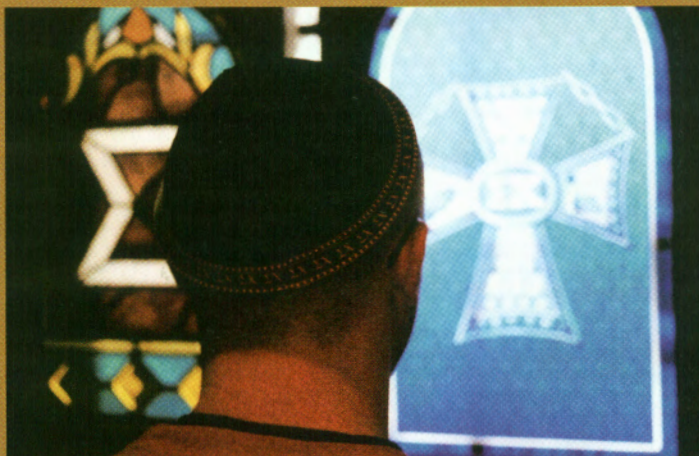
[Long pause ...] "Sigma Chi?"

"Yes, Sigma Chi."

"You mean the one with the cross?"

"Uh, yes, that's the one. Why do you ask?"

"Because you're Jewish, remember?"



I am a Jewish Sigma Chi

by Richard M. Segal, Yale 1988

glowing sign that appeared to Constantine was a cross, and not a frog, a turnip or a doughnut? Of course not—It was clearly a Christian religious revelation, and one that later led Constantine, as well as the entire Roman Empire, to convert to Christianity. However, it is not merely because of his tie to Christianity that Constantine has a place in Sigma Chi lore. Rather, it was his miraculous experience—and thus this particular sign—that motivated Constantine to reach for his goals, to strive for his ideals, to venture for greatness. It is for this reason that our Order looks to Constantine and the White Cross as symbols—to identify our common ideals, to set our goals and to strive to reach them throughout our lives. These purposes and motivations are not unique to any one religion, and can guide any person from any ethnic or religious background.

Finally, I try to explain, in simple terms, what Sigma Chi is all about, and why I joined. We are an organization dedi-

cated to bringing college men together to help them grow as human beings through friendship, common ideals, education and mutual support. While these purposes may be Christian in some sense, they are not exclusively so. They can be (and are) shared by people of different races, religions, ethnic backgrounds and personal philosophies. They are purposes that I shared as an undergraduate and that I share now. They are purposes that make our chapters and our General Fraternity strong. These purposes are why I became a Sigma Chi.

YES, MOM, THAT IS A CROSS ON MY RING. And it's a cross that this nice Jewish boy is proud to display for all to see. ♡

Segal is a lawyer practicing in San Diego. He served as assistant chapter advisor to Sigma Chi's chapter at Harvard from 1989 to 1991 while he was a law student. After moving to San Diego, he served as chapter advisor to the chapter at California-San Diego for seven years and served on the recruitment team faculty at Balfour Leadership Training Workshop for four years.

MY PLAN WAS TO come out in college. When I answered the door on my first night in the freshmen residence hall, I found a Sigma Chi who was recruiting freshmen to attend a party that night. My roommates and I went to what was our first real college social experience. During the night, I changed into the straight guy that I seemed to play so well, and I changed my plan—I was not coming out that year.

In contemplating becoming a Sigma Chi, I thought my option was to either come out of the closet and not join the Fraternity or stay in the closet and join—being a gay fraternity member did not seem possible. Since I had been gay for a long time without anyone else knowing, I figured I could keep it a secret for a while longer, thinking that if anything, I would come out someday when I was, perhaps, the president of Sigma Chi. I made that my plan-of-action.

My pledge brothers and I were initiated in December of 1996. I was the second minority brother to be initiated into the Theta Zeta Chapter. I soon after learned that leading a certain lifestyle had its consequences. I put myself into a situation where I had to do what college guys do. I dated the prettiest of women and played the serious frat boy. The partying continued, and fraternity life was at its peak, yet I could not be myself. I could not be gay.

In 1998, I was elected the chapter's youngest and first black Consul. I put great emphasis on making things happen. My chapter was involved with everything, as all chapters should be. We received awards from the General Fraternity and contributed more than 5,000 hours of community service. I was nominated and elected by other Greeks as Mr. Greek, the outstanding Greek award given by the Student Activities office. But with all that the chapter and I had accomplished, I was not happy and I could not face myself.

In April 1999, I was elected to serve another year as Consul. I was committed to my chapter and I realized that my chaptermates looked up to me for guidance. This time around, however, my emotions and mental health began to get the best of me. I became a "dead man walking"—overwhelmed with responsibility. I began losing control of my chapter, and my grades started to slip. I felt like I really needed to get this secret off my chest. I thought for a moment that since I had waited four years to share my secret, these guys would not walk out on me. They were my friends. But I also feared that they could interpret this the wrong way, that they could possibly see me as a liar and a fake. I wondered, "If everyone turns their backs, what the hell will I do?" I would be embarrassed and ashamed of myself.

Later that year, rumors about my sexuality filtered through campus. I was one of the last people to know. When my roommate told me he had heard rumors about me being gay, I felt weak and began to sweat. I remember asking him if he had believed the rumors. He said he didn't, that he had known me for four years and at this point he had no reason to believe this. I was relieved when he said that.

At the next chapter meeting I spoke about this matter, making a bold and, as I later realized, selfish move to cover things up. I made jokes about gays just to feel out a response. I felt that I was selling myself out when I had an opportunity to come out, but fear got the best of me.

I came out officially to everyone at the chapter house in July of 2000. After my announcement, the room was quiet for a minute, and then almost one-by-one, brothers responded with hugs and handshakes. Many brothers had believed the rumors all along and had been waiting to hear it from me; others were shocked. But lucky for me, I had the support that I needed. It was as if nothing had changed. Relief. Brothers told me that I was the same guy that they were initiated with, hung out

with and the same guy that they called their friend.

My last year at Bridgewater proved to be the best year of my life. I could finally be myself. Having to keep such a secret was the most difficult thing—nobody should have to ever feel that way. Sigma Chi changed my life and changed the lives of many people I've encountered. The Fraternity has proven to me that the true bonds of brotherhood are strong no matter what the situation may be.

I wanted to prove to myself that I could be and do anything I wanted—gay or straight. My life would have been easier if I had been true to myself earlier on. I am who I am, and I think my brothers realized that. I'm a believer that people will respect you more for being who you are. It's not a question of sexual preference but a question of the heart. Only true hearts can be true Sigma Chis. I am a true Sigma Chi. ♣

Valcy (below) is currently on the waiting list for the Boston Police Department. He and his partner, James, live in the South End area of Boston.



For the record, as most gay men would agree,
gay is not something we become overnight, but something we always are.
I found coming out and admitting it to myself to be

my most difficult task

by Mike Valcy, Bridgewater 2001

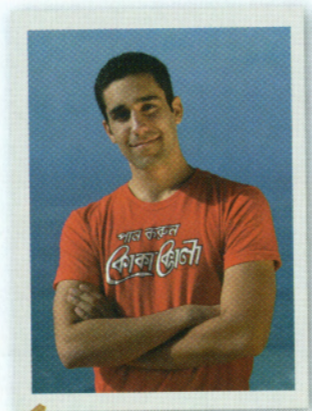
DIVERSE?

di·verse (dī-vûrs', dī'vûrs') *adj.* 1. Differing one from another. 2. Made up of distinct characteristics, qualities, or elements: *a diverse history*

~*The American Heritage College Dictionary, Third Edition*

AFTER TAKING ON THE “FIND-A-DIVERSE-UNDERGRADUATE-CHAPTER-AND-WRITE-ABOUT-THE-MEMBERS” ASSIGNMENT, I CONFERRED WITH VARIOUS HQ STAFFERS ABOUT WHERE TO FIND A SOLID, DIVERSE CHAPTER. WE CREATED A LIST THAT PLACED THE SIGMA CHI CHAPTER AT CALIFORNIA-SAN DIEGO AT THE TOP—A FAMILIAR SPOT FOR THE 13-YEAR-OLD CHAPTER. BY NICOLE VOGES

Photography for The Magazine by Jerry Nelson, Utah State 1977



THOUGH AS AN AWARD-WINNING CHAPTER, *Iota Chi* was a sound choice, Consul Jason Joyal's, 2004, response sealed my decision to pay them a visit. He was somewhat hesitant after learning the intent of the article—concerned with the image such a story would give the chapter. He wanted more details. I wanted to ease his mind, but didn't want to divulge too much, didn't want the chapter to become what they thought I wanted or needed them to be. Jason and the chapter ultimately set aside their apprehension, deciding that they had nothing to hide, so in early November, I journeyed to San Diego.

The following four profiles provide a colorful slice of the chapter. Each is distinct. Each differs from the others. Additional interviews are available on SIGMACHI.ORG.



"IOTA CHI APPRECIATES DIVERSITY, BUT AT THE SAMETIME THEY DON'T REALLY MAKE IT A BIG DEAL. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE WE'RE FROM, OR WHAT WE DO, OR WHAT WE'RE USED TO DOING. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT WE HAVE THE SAME GOAL AND THE SAME MANNER OF HAVING FUN." ~ RUBÉN MIER, 2007



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RUBÉN MIER, 2007

I met Rubén for the first time on Monday night when I went to observe a pledge meeting and talk about why I was there. I encouraged the pledges to send story ideas to The Magazine and SIGMACHI.ORG. I hadn't scheduled individual meetings with any of the pledges, but I had piqued Rubén's interest. He thought his band, Unbound, might be an interesting enough subject for a Web story. I firmly believe that everyone has a personal story, so I asked Rubén to tell me his.

By way of piñata

I was born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina. When I was about 13, my family moved to Pueblo, Mexico, because my dad had to go there for business. He used to have a monopoly on the piñata industry. Then we moved to the United States, to a place called Chula Vista, Calif.—and most of the piñatas in the United States are still my dad's.

Uno, two, três

I am trilingual. I speak Spanish, English and Portuguese. I came here when I was 13. I didn't know a single word of English, but I finally learned it. I don't have an accent because I'm a theatre major. I've always been into acting and public speaking, so I had to take some phonetics courses that sort of explained to me how to pronounce things. My mom and my dad butcher English. You can't understand them, especially my dad. And when I speak Spanish or Portuguese, I don't have an accent of another language either. I like to speak the language truly—with every inflection. I like sounds, I really emphasize sounds. When I came here and I heard how people spoke, I realized that I didn't have that sort of same inflection, especially for English. It's a really hard language because it's not phonetic—what you see spelled is not what you say. You say things differently. Once I learned that, I got rid of my accent. Plus, kids made fun of me, so I had to get rid of it.

In Mexico there's a different sort of dialect than there is in Argentina. Kind of like if you were to compare how we speak here in California to how they speak in Virginia—the Southern drawl and all that. It's really thick, totally different. Sometimes I listen to people from there and I don't even know what they're saying. So when I got to Mexico I had to learn the whole Mexican way of saying things. Kids made fun of me for that, too. Mexican isn't a language, so I can't really say I speak Mexican, but I speak with that certain dialect. I really pay attention to detail in language.

A calling

I took some time off school—two quarters—to go on a mission for the Mormon Church. I wanted to go because I saw what an impact it had on other people. I wanted to change my pace and help others for a while. I was sent to Salt Lake City to work with the Latino community, and the mission consisted of service, service and more service. From 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., I would be out knocking on doors, teaching people about God and doing lots of community service—including clean-ups, moving, yard work, cooking, raising money for families to buy food and other such acts of fellowship.

The topic of conversation

I didn't know much about fraternities because they don't exist in South America. But at Sigma Chi I felt invited and welcome and accepted, and it was a really good feeling that I wasn't getting from other [fraternities]. My background was very good conversation. It surprised a lot of people—I'm fair skinned, and you have an image of what someone from South America looks like, and I definitely don't fit into that image. However, in Argentina, it's like 80 percent fair-skinned people.

My heritage is a really important part of my life—the language, the culture, the mannerisms. I thought it would be very important to talk about it when I was rushing because it's a part of who I am. So I would tell them I'm from South America. The word spread, and soon other people were coming up to me. They did embrace it really well.

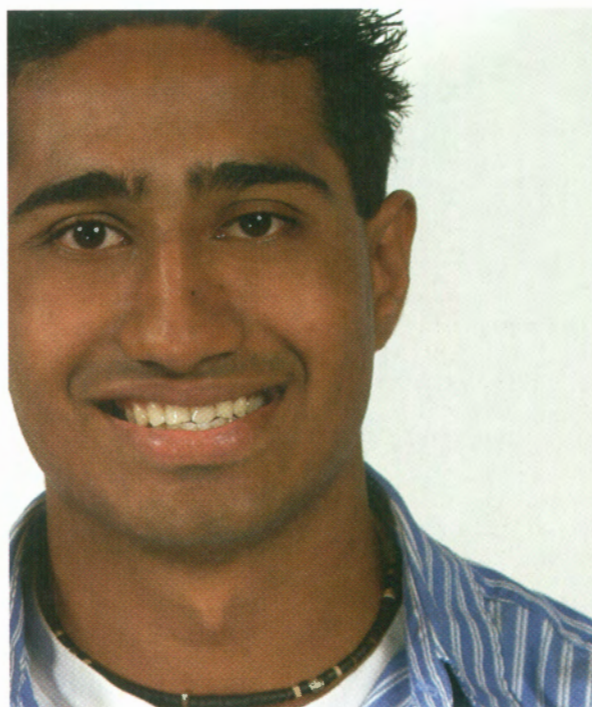
The American way

I have lots of friends who are Latin—friends from South America, from Mexico—they speak Spanish and I hang out with them all the time. In my house we only speak Spanish, and we have all the traditions—the feasts and the little ceremonies. So I didn't feel like I needed that in a fraternity. I was looking for a brotherhood—a large group of friends that I could learn and grow from. Plus, I'm still learning the whole "American" way of doing things. There's a lot of diversity, and I wasn't expecting that. In Sigma Chi there are guys who come from all different places—they're different and that's cool—but that's not one of the reasons why I joined.

His true identity

I can totally play off that I'm from America. People don't associate me as being Argentinean—they're like, "No, you're from America, you're from here, obviously." I'm actually glad that I was open with them, and look, I'm a little bit different and I'm from here. Maybe you can learn from me, and I'll learn from you.

Iota Chi appreciates diversity, but at the same time they don't really make it a big deal. It doesn't matter where we're from, or what we do, or what we're used to doing. What matters is that we have the same goal and the same manner of having fun. I didn't have to fit a certain template or a certain category. I didn't have to be labeled at all. What really matters is me as a person, and their genuine interest in who I am, which has something to do with culture, but not everything to do with it. ■■■■■



"MY PARENTS DON'T KNOW I'M IN A FRATERNITY. IT'S KIND OF A JOKE AROUND THE GUYS. IN MY CULTURE, EDUCATION COMES FIRST, AND IF ANYTHING COMES IN THE WAY OF EDUCATION, IT'S A SLIGHT PROBLEM."
~ DUSHYANTH REDDY, 2005

DUSHYANTH REDDY, 2005

Dushyanth's mom took him out to lunch for his birthday on Tuesday, so we had to reschedule our interview. I missed the birthday bash his roommates threw for him on Tuesday night, but I'm glad I didn't miss meeting him altogether. Everyone told me I needed to talk to Dushyanth. I thought, partly due to my inability to correctly pronounce his name on my first three tries, that he'd been recommended as an interviewee to give me the visible "diverse" perspective I supposedly needed. It turns out that Dushyanth brings far more than his Indian heritage to Sigma Chi's mix.

One BIG move

My parents have been [in the United States] for 25 years now. My mom was on vacation in India and had me there—I was premature by three weeks or so. Since it happened kind of out of nowhere and it was a big hassle to get a Green Card, my grandparents were like, “Well, just have him stay here.” They wanted me to grow up a little bit there, wanted me to get a deeper sense of India.

When I was about three, my mom and dad came back and I went home with them. We moved about 13 times. I got [to California] my sophomore year [of high school], and it was just another move for me, only it was a little bit bigger.

A clique-e situation

Most of the Indian clubs are really quite gossipy, and I wanted to step out of that. Through high school, primarily all of my friends were white. It's not that I have a problem hanging out with other Indian people—I just get annoyed with what they talk about sometimes. It's the same as when you hang out in a little clique. I think a lot of Asians in general do that. Once they're in their clique, they just don't tend to jive as well with other races. It's weird because everyone's pretty much diverse and into diversity, but it's still there sadly.

Our culture has arranged marriages. I think that's part of the reason they get so gossipy. A lot of the girls are starting to look for potential husbands and it's easier for them to say to their parents, “Hey, I found a nice Indian boy,” like a “do-you-approve?”-type thing, instead of a random person their parents find. It becomes a sort-of “who's dating who.”

A big part of Indian culture is stability. Most Indians end up being doctors or engineers—it's a stereotype, but it's a very valid stereotype. I am an engineering student. My sister wants to be a doctor. If I wanted to be an architect, my parents would support me, but at the same time, they'd wish I was an engineer. It's nice to kind of step out of that world. I have more of a sense of freedom. I think that's why I tend to hang out with friends that are white. It's not that I look for that, but it's nice to have it around.

His not-so-little secret

My parents don't know I'm in a fraternity. It's kind of a joke around the guys. In my culture, education comes first, and if anything comes in the way of education, it's a slight problem. It's a big deal because I hate not sharing it with them—the thousands of things I do with these guys—but I've gotten used to it.

If I told them I was in a fraternity and I started to slack a little bit, the first thing they'd say is, “It's because you're in a fraternity.” What frustrates me the most is that they know the guys—my mom met all my roommates this week and she was totally thrilled about who I was living with. And just saying the word “fraternity” would make her question a lot. In no way is it that I'm ashamed of anything that we do in this chapter, it's more that it's just convenient. It really bothers me around scholarship time when we have our scholarship banquet, because all the parents come, and if [my parents] saw that, they would just be amazed. But at the same time I am not personally ready to invite them and just be like, “Hey, I'm in this organization. It just so happens to be a fraternity.”

Joining and quitting

I actually ended up getting a bid and two weeks into it I depledged. I was playing lacrosse, soccer and training to be on the track team. I thought I could handle it, but if I can't give absolutely 100 percent then I don't want to do it. I looked at my pledge class—they're very ambitious guys that run half of our chapter now—and I didn't want to just go sliding through, because everyone talks about how much you get out of pledge quarter. I wrote the guys a letter and said, “I'm really sorry about this, I don't have time for this right now. I don't want to half-ass it, but I'll be back out here in spring. I hope to see you guys then.”

And joining again

I went back out and I got a bid and I knew I was going to go through with it. At that point I wanted to give it my all, so I took pledge class president. It was probably one of the best quarters I've had. We're just insanely close as a pledge class. These are the guys I confide in. I think that was one of the biggest surprises for me during pledge quarter. You really appreciate how different everyone is and how different their personalities are, and I never expected to get that much out of it.

Sharing his culture

I think before I graduate I'm going to take a handful of guys to India—because there are a lot of parts that I have yet to experience. I try to go back every two years—it's nice to see how it's developing.

Respect and marriage

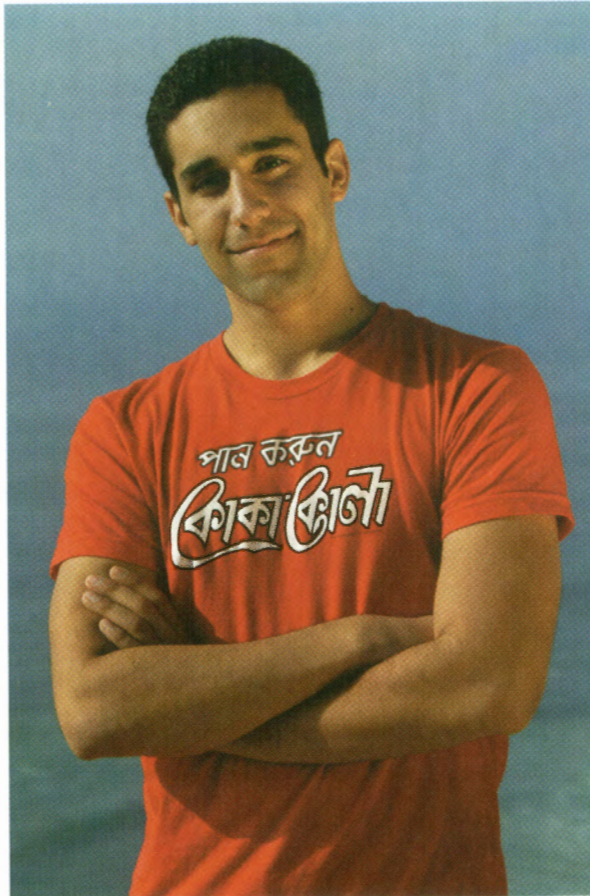
Basically you do anything for a girl—you bend over backwards. You don't really ask a girl to do anything, you just kind of take care of yourself. The guys know that a part of my culture is the amount of respect you have for females. It's funny that our chapter is pretty much that exact same way. I would say that every guy honestly respects girls.

I haven't dated an Indian girl, but I know that I'll marry one. My parents had an arranged marriage. My dad was originally planned to marry a movie star, and for whatever reason something ended up happening and he married my mom.

Getting the support he needs

My parents not knowing, that's one aspect of diversity that I bring to the table. It's not just that I'm Indian. Imagine having neither the financial support, nor the emotional support that I would say most guys take for granted in the chapter. I think they respect me for it and, more and more, they push me to tell my parents because they know how much pride I have for this chapter. They're all supportive of me not telling them if I'm not ready—but they want my parents to know what's [shaped] a lot of my personality.

I think the most I bring to my chapter is letting them know how I've been brought up. I've never gotten a single racist comment. It's cool because I would say they're not even openly cautious about it. That's just the type of guys they are. ■■■■■



"I STARTED TO EMBRACE MY CULTURE A LOT TOWARD THE END OF MY FIRST YEAR, SO I GOT INTO THE PERSIAN CLUB. THEN IT JUST BECAME SOMETHING I WASN'T INTERESTED IN—JUST HAVING FRIENDSHIPS BASED SOLELY ON MY CULTURE." ~ SEAN GRAMMY, 2004



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Sean and I squeezed in an interview before the Iota Chi volleyball team faced another fraternity for the IFC championship. Though he seemed fierce as he shouted words of encouragement to his brothers, I know from our interview that he's simply full of passion. He's protective of his chapter's image too, and was ever so slightly suspicious of me. Don't get me wrong—we got along great, but Sean has strong opinions about diversity in his chapter, and Sigma Chi as a whole, and he wasn't about to let me get away without sharing them.

On being driven

My parents were very supportive of me in my school work—driving me to do the best that I could and always preparing me for whatever was ahead of me. It got me very academically minded. And that's very much a part of our culture. Being a second-generation Persian, academics were even more stressed because my parents came [to the United States] with nothing, developed something, and I had all these opportunities to grasp. They were just trying to prepare me as much as possible and make sure I utilized all the resources I had—to do the best with whatever I was given.

On doing his thing

I did my thing for two years aside from the Greek community. I didn't know much about [the Greek community] and it just wasn't my thing—I made my own social life. I started to embrace my culture a lot toward the end of my first year, so I got into the Persian Club. We became a really tight-knit group of friends, and then my sophomore year I became the president. Then it just became something I wasn't interested in—just having friendships based solely on my culture.

During my third year I decided to rush. Sigma Chi was just the most incredible fit for me. The Persian Club, which had a member base of about 120 people, was basically a core group of friends. I couldn't go Greek because my hands were full with just maintaining that club. And once I went Greek, it was just a time situation; it wasn't a conflict of interests, because I don't really envision my culture and the Fraternity being something that are in conflict with each other. There's no notion of "because of Sigma Chi you can't do this." The world is open—I can do whatever I want.

Two years ago when I was involved with the Persian Club I would have said "these are my boys, regardless of our culture, regardless of what we share in common." Looking back, I was friends with maybe 10 guys, and I still remain in contact with one or two. The friendship was strong on the surface, but there wasn't really a deep foundation.

Fitting in

Sigma Chi has a reputation for being a Caucasian, Protestant-founded fraternity. How's a Persian, Muslim-born guy going to fit into that? That stretch, that challenge to me, was almost

more enticing than anything else—and [Sigma Chi] wasn't just a Protestant, white fraternity.

I didn't tell anybody I was president of the Persian Club when I came out to rush. They found out the last day of rush. They were like, "Whoa, you're president of the Persian Club, you didn't tell us this." And I said, "It's not a necessity that you know this. I'm interested in Sigma Chi right now. I'm not interested in giving you a résumé of how diverse I am."

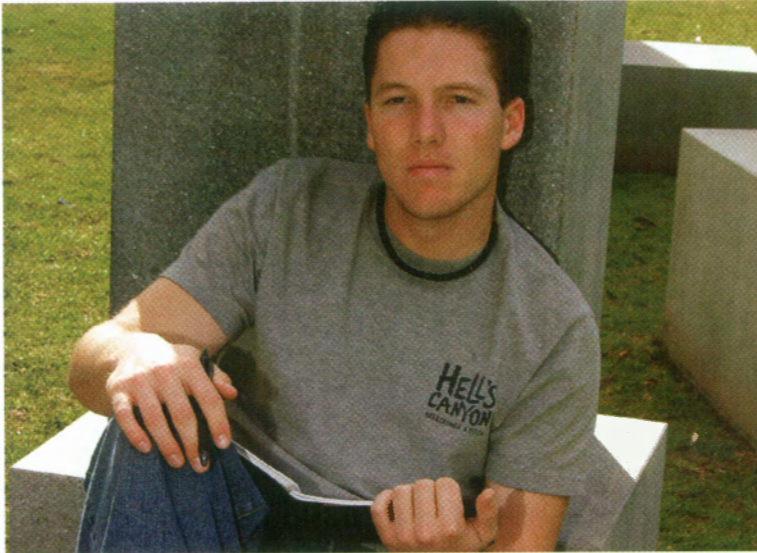
His take on diversity

There are guys that have their own culture, and they might not appear to be by definition "cultural." Culture to me isn't something that has to be extremely vocalized. I'm kind of uncomfortable with the whole notion of diversity because there's a really fine line. Some people actively go seek diversity for the name of diversity, like "We're diverse—we've got a black guy in our chapter." I've gone through rush and I've heard guys say, "This guy is so cool because he can speak another language" or "because he has a cultural background." I want to hear, "Alright, this guy is cool because he's a man of good character. He's a student of fair ability."

It's a fear of mine—going for diversity just for the sake of saying you're diverse, because then that just eliminates any valuable asset you would gain from that diversity.

Truthfully, it bothers me if we are considered the diverse chapter—we're still far from being as diverse as possible. Like, if the focus is on us, then I'm kind of worried about what's going on on the other side of the country.

I'm so comfortable around these guys because they're interested in me as a person, and they're interested in my culture. It's something that we embrace in the Ritual, and it's something that we embrace daily. I don't take it as being exceptional; I just take it as adding something to it.



"I DEFINE DIVERSITY AS SOMETHING THAT TESTS YOUR COMFORT ZONE. MAYBE IT'S BETTER IF I DEFINE IT BY A LACK OF DIVERSITY—A LACK OF DIVERSITY IS SOMETHING THAT NEVER PUSHES YOU IN A DIRECTION YOU'RE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH."

~ CONOR NOLEN, 2004



CONOR NOLEN, 2004

Conor and I began our interview informally at In-N-Out Burger on my last day in San Diego. I wasn't taking notes, so we continued it back at the chapter house, where Conor and seven other members live, and it wrapped up my four-day adventure. Again, my carefully planned agenda had led me to Conor, but not by way of diversity. Our interview occurred simply because of his role within the chapter. As Pro Consul and one of the older guys living in the chapter house, he was an ideal candidate. But Conor shared a lot more than the history of the chapter as he's known it. He gave me yet another perspective on the chapter's diverse makeup.

A legacy is born

I'm from a small, middle-class, cookie-cutter town right outside of Sacramento. My parents both went to Berkeley, my father was [initiated at the Alpha Beta chapter] there. They had me when they were 35—they were really old.

Do unto others

I went to excellent schools. My high school was awesome, tons of academic opportunities. The teachers were great, they completely cared about the students. They really put in a lot of effort, and it's funny now because I work for an academic mentoring firm through UCSD—the Early Academic Outreach Program. I go to underprivileged high schools and help [the students] out because their teachers and their counseling departments don't really help them.

Sweet Home California

Getting into UCSD was amazing. It was my first choice. I grew up in northern California, and to have the opportunity to be a part of the So-Cal culture was amazing. The other option was me going to Colorado because I got a ski scholarship there to do alpine skiing, but I just couldn't leave California.

I had my doubts about UCSD—the social scene is really lacking. You have to be an ambitious social person to make it. You have to make an active effort and seek out the social opportunities.

A tough decision

I played tennis for UCSD my freshman year and the beginning of my sophomore year, which was an awesome experience. To have the opportunity to play in college was amazing, but I was never going to go pro. I knew where my ceiling was and I had hit it, so I dropped out of that—mostly because of Sigma Chi. I saw what kind of opportunities and values I could get from Sigma Chi, and it was more of a cost/benefits thing. I knew that if I were to stick with tennis, there would be things I'd have to cut out of my life—Sigma Chi would have to be one of those things. With Sigma Chi I knew that there were going to be things down the line that were going to test who I was and push me.

Owning up

You have pride in what you help create, and I helped create the Fraternity that is present now. Sometimes it's hard for me to look at it from an objective point of view. It's hard to step back and question things that you love so much.

It's like with the hazing traditions, it's hard for some chapters to step back and say, "you know, we've been doing these things for a really long time and while there's a lot of comfort in our traditions, maybe our traditions aren't really going the same direction as the way the Fraternity was founded, or the direction that they wanted us to go." Who could deny that the purpose of our Fraternity is to cultivate friendships, and is hazing going to be the best way of doing that?

Past, present, future

While we do have Syrians, Armenians, Persians, Argentineans, Mexicans, I see just as much diversity in people's futures, pasts, presents. We have a guy in our fraternity who had brain cancer and he had a third of his brain removed. I can't imagine that—I've been so healthy my whole life. I've had prosperity thrown my way, and to see certain individuals hit speed bumps, and to see them still pushing so hard to succeed is amazing. I see our chapter almost as a self-help group. When somebody is feeling down, they can always look to someone who's experienced something similar. Our chapter's so comfortable that we don't even need to say it, we've learned it from one another—our pasts and our presents. When something goes wrong, we know who to go to.

While I do put amazing faith in our chapter for being ethically and religiously diverse, I find the most amazing thing to be the fact that we have so many guys with different temperaments, talents and convictions.

My biggest thing about the diversity of our chapter is not the skin color, it's really the things that I learn from people—from their backgrounds and their family orientations. I define diversity as something that tests your comfort zone. Maybe it's better if I define it by a lack of diversity—a lack of diversity is something that never pushes you in a direction you're uncomfortable with. ■■■■■

IT WAS HARD TO SAY GOODBYE to the men of the Iota Chi Chapter. Not only had visiting them provided me with enough examples of diversity to profile the chapter, but I'd personally gained a new definition of the word "diverse." In its simplest form, diversity is: made up of distinct characteristics, qualities, or elements. The men of Iota Chi embody this definition—but nowhere in that definition is ethnicity mentioned. These Sigs are ethnically diverse, but when they recognize their diversity, they're likely not talking about their racial differences. They're talking about their political differences, their religious views, their socioeconomic backgrounds or their emotional scars. If I'd gone to their chapter seeking only their ethnic differences, I would have missed out on what it is that truly makes Iota Chi a thriving Sigma Chi chapter. There's no diversity formula that provides Iota Chi with the right ingredients for achieving personal, campus and General Fraternity success. What they've got is a collective frame of mind that's conducive to growth, to learning from and celebrating each other's differences and to sharing in the one thing they've got in common—their diversity. 